

Media Advisory

National Weather Service, Des Moines, IA

March 12, 2010

This spring, the National Weather Service in Des Moines will have a new policy concerning a high-impact call-to-action called a “tornado emergency”. This new policy will officially go into effect immediately. If you have any questions, please contact Jeff Johnson at the National Weather Service at 515-270-4501, E726. Thank you.

New Tornado Emergency Policy: The “tornado emergency” is NOT a new warning type! It is a high-impact call-to-action for high end tornado events. The broadcast media is strongly encouraged to read the “tornado emergency” call-to-action on the air and stress the high end nature of the threat. Here is the tornado policy:

Definition:

A TORNADO EMERGENCY means that significant, widespread damage with a high likelihood of numerous fatalities is expected to continue with a strong and violent tornado. A tornado emergency is not a new warning product, but a new, visible and high impact call-to-action.

Intended Purpose:

- *To motivate and provide a sense of urgency to persons in the path of this storm to take immediate shelter in a reinforced structure that offers maximum protection from destructive winds.*
- *To communicate to state, local, and county officials and emergency responders that they should prepare for immediate search and rescue operations.*
- *To communicate the need to prepare for immediate medical emergencies, evacuation measures, and emergency sheltering.*

Format:

A statement in the third bullet of the warning

A headline at the top of the Severe Weather Statement that states, “...TORNADO EMERGENCY FOR [GEOGRAPHIC AREA]...” The “tornado emergency” would be issued predominately in Severe Weather Statements since it is highly likely that a tornado warning would be in effect.

Criteria:

- A large and catastrophic tornado has been confirmed and will continue (*A radar signature alone is not sufficient*)
- It is going to have a high impact and/or affect a highly vulnerable population (*Historically, this probably has happened once every 10 years in our warning area.*)
- Numerous fatalities expected.

